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Preparatory Committee
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Agenda items 5 and 9

STATUS OF PREPARATION OF PUBLICATIONS, STUDIES AND DOCUMENTS FOR THE WORLD CONFERENCE

CONSIDERATION OF THE FINAL OUTCOME OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE, TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THE PREPARATORY WORK AND THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE REGIONAL MEETINGS

Contribution from International Federation Terre des Hommes

The attention of the Preparatory Committee is drawn to the attached statement from International Federation Terre des Hommes, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (category II).

I) With reference to our written communication sent to the Chairperson of the Third Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Human Rights, we welcome the many written and oral statements which have been made within the preparatory conferences and regional proceedings in support of the inclusion of the Rights of the Child as an integral part of the broader discussion of human rights at the World Conference. The fact that the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified by an unprecedented number of States must not overshadow the fact that its actual implementation and effect on the everyday lives of millions of children worldwide are far from being felt by the majority today. We agree with and gladly quote Mr. James P. Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, in saying that "gross violations of human rights lead to the majority of the deaths of 35,000 children every day in developing countries". Children in industrialized countries are not spared by this phenomenon.

II) Children cannot be isolated from violations affecting their families and adults in general. Thus, although children have their "own" Convention, full implementation of ALL human rights treaties as well as concrete measures to improve procedures, making them more efficient, effective and inter-active, are indispensable. For example, we recommend that specific emergency procedures be devised within the Human Rights structures to provide for direct handling of communications concerning any violations of the Rights of the Child.

III) Sufficiently mature children and young people should be ensured of acceptance as active participants in the World Conference, both at official and non-governmental proceedings. They could possibly be members of official or NGO delegations. We feel it important that their voices be heard at a <u>substantive</u> level.

IV) Because of the holistic nature of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and for the reasons briefly outlined in point I) above, we strongly recommend that greater emphasis be put on the Rights of the Child in several of the principles proposed in Working Paper A/Conf.157/PC/82, as

well as in that document's section devoted to a programme for action. The modifications we recommend are as follows :

(Changes in wording are underlined)

Principle 12 :

The World Conference, recalling the principle of First Call for Children, and welcoming the early ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by a large number of States, recalls that these rights form an integral and indivisible part of universal human rights, and stresses the need for full implementation of the Convention through all appropriate national and international legislative, administrative and other measures. To strengthen the enjoyment of these rights, additional substantive and procedural provisions, including the right of petition, should be examined in the context of this Convention. The particular needs of the child should be given priority status in the United Nations system-wide action on human rights. National and international programmes should be established for the protection of children and adolescents, in particular the girl child, abandoned children, sexually and economically exploited children, children living in the streets and refugee children. In all actions concerning them, the views of the children should be given due weight.

Principle 14 :

Modify the second sentence as follows :

It stresses that universal acceptance of all the major human rights treaties, keeping the level of reservations as low as possible and and fully compatible with the fundamental purpose of each treaty, is imperative for all States.

Principle 18 :

Faced with urgent situations of massive or continuing and grave violations of human rights and/or humanitarian law, or an immiment threat thereof, the United Nations are urged to develop means to respond more effectively and more speedily to such situations, including genocide, so-called "ethnic cleansing" or "social cleansing", systematic rape of women and children, extrajudicial executions and other indiscriminate killings including those of children, enforced or involuntary disappearances, torture, flagrant acts of racism and racial discrimination, slavery, massive acts of violence against women and children, armed attacks on

civilians and the blocking of humanitarian relief. (Last two sentences unchanged.)

Under section DRAFT PROGRAMME OF ACTION :

Sub-section B, Paragraph 3 :

At the end of paragraph 3, add 2 sentences :

Children of minority groups and indigenous peoples should not be discriminated against in terms of health, education or any other services. They should be allowed to use and learn the language of their own community within the system of education.

After sub-section C, add a new sub-section D :

D. The Rights of the Child

D-1) The World Conference urges that all measures be taken to reach the targets set at the World Summit for Children held in 1990, particularly with regard to reduction of child mortality and morbidity, and access to basic education.

D-2) Measures to ensure the protection of and assistance to children in armed conflicts should be taken. Children physically or psychologically traumatized by war should receive adequate aftercare and rehabilitation. Children should not be recruited as soldiers. Respect for humanitarian norms in all cases of armed conflict should be guaranteed by States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The World Conference also urges the elaboration of a draft optional protocol to this Convention, raising to 18 years the age mentioned in its Article 38.

D-3) Economic reforms or structural adjustments should include clauses providing social buffers protecting the rights and well-being of children. Abusive and harmful exploitation of child labour, child prostitution or the sale of children for whatever purpose should be actively combatted. All national or international economic and/or financial organizations are called upon to respect and enforce such efforts.

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The above statement is co-sponsored by the following organizations :

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